

Wicked Whispers by f4life

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Summary: Eve Clancy has lived in Hawkins all of her life. A good girl and daughter to single mom Evelyn Clancy, she's a straight A student and always plays by the rules. But when she takes a weekend job babysitting Maxine Hargrove, she finds her world flipped upside down when Billy Hargrove becomes part of her life. And as if that wasn't enough, her best friend Annie goes missing.

1. Chapter 1: Pretty Eyes

A/N: Hi all, so I'm excited to get this out there as it's been on my mind for a while. I haven't written a story in years, as you can tell by my profile. So, naturally, my writing is a bit rusty and I apologise for that in advance. I really wanted to write a story for Billy in which he meets a girl that is good for him and not some one night stand. Someone who can give him the love he actually deserves. Anyways, thank you so much for reading!

Chapter One: Pretty Eyes

October 1984

In my head, I'm confident and think quickly on my feet. The insults and cruel taunts from my peers reverberate off of me, my ego intact. In mirrors my reflection pleases me, my flaws non-existent and my skin crystal clear. Everyone wants to be me, cool kids want to date me.

In reality, I'm anxious and draw blanks when I'm singled out. The nasty words hurt me, destroying what little confidence I have. And as I stare at my reflection in the bathroom mirror, I sigh at the sight of the always present baggy eyes and a zit that's beginning to form on my chin. My curly brown hair tied up in a bun because it's the only hairstyle that I get right every time. Nobody wants to be me, no one has ever dated me.

And I care about these things, maybe a little too much.

As I'm standing there by the sink, Natalie and Jemma enter the bathroom, flipping their bleached blonde hair over their shoulders, heads held high. The most popular girls in my grade, they exude confidence and their dolled up faces make them look like mannequins; too pretty to be real, but lacking human emotion.

Coming to stand next to me, they give me a once over through the mirror and snicker. "You might want to pop that zit on your chin, Eve, or you might just be a virgin for life."

"Have you ever tried being nice, even once?" I say as my cheeks begin to flush.

They both share a look before bursting out laughing. I take that as my cue to leave; they had already done enough damage for one morning. How did they know I was a virgin? Did I look like one? Do all virgins give off a vibe the same way straight people claim homosexuals give off 'gay vibes'?

I hurriedly make my way to the cafeteria, head down, the humiliation eating away at me. Every time this happens I envision myself standing up to them, destroying them completely with some wicked comeback. But it's only a fantasy; I will never have the balls to defend myself.

"Hey Evie, you okay?"

Startled, I look up and find Wayne standing by the entrance. His brown eyes are kind and I thank my lucky stars I have a friend like him. "Hey! Yeah, you know me, I was just thinking... as usual." I brush him off. "How was your weekend?"

"Sick. I managed to get us into Tina's Halloween party. You, me, Annie, we're in."

I can't hide my disappointment; I had never wanted to go. "Oh, that's great Wayne. I just don't know if I'll be able to make it."

He narrows his eyes at me. "Eve, we talked about this. Screw everyone, we'll have so much fun and get so fucking drunk we won't even care. You've got to go! Plus, Brian will be there, your future husband."

I roll my eyes but manage a smile. "Wayne, I... I'll feel really out of place, I'm not cool enough for that party, plus I don't even have a costume."

"Oh my god, how old are you? Ninety? We'll figure something out, I'm sure Annie has some costumes at hers. Don't you want to have fun? Maybe get chatted up by some hot guy and be french kissed, but also not remember any of it the following morning? Come on Evie,

please."

With a heavy sigh, I nod. "Fine, but you owe me!"

He drops to one knee in front of me. "I am at your service."

I extend my hand to him and he takes it in his, planting a kiss on it. "I could get used to this," I say, chuckling.

We both head for our usual table and find Annie already seated, waiting for us with a mischievous smile on her face. I climb onto the seat facing her and quirk my eyebrow. "Spit it out."

"I bumped into that really hot British guy again."

Annie had never stopped talking about this guy from the moment she'd met him during our summer vacation. He had an uncle living in Hawkins, Mr. Farrington, and just as the lucky stars would have it, Annie lived next door.

I lean forward. "Oh my gosh, what happened? Did he ask you on a date?"

She blushes. "You bet he did, we're going out this Friday. I really like him, he's not like the guys around here, he's more... open minded, if you get me? But that's to be expected, I mean he's from London, way more going on over there."

Annie was my second best friend. She was a beautiful blonde with eyes the colour of a rainforest but with the warmth of a mid-summer's day, kind and gentle, sad but hopeful. A fine specimen of a woman, she'd had her fair share of boyfriends, so this wasn't exactly news to me. But I was happy for her, she deserved something long lasting, I just hoped this was it.

"What exactly do you mean by that, Annie? Are you saying we are not open minded enough for you?" Wayne responds mockingly, nudging her with his shoulder. "I don't see anything wrong with a small town kinda guy like me."

I laugh. "Wayne, you're the exception."

"He couldn't be that good looking, surely? I think it's the accent that you like more than anything," he teases. "All this 'he's so open minded' is such bullshit. You want to jump his bones, that's all."

She hits him across the arm playfully. "The last part is true, but I'm actually serious guys. He's a sweetheart."

"Well, maybe you could introduce us to him at... Tina's Halloween Bash! I got us in!"

"You didn't!" she exclaims, her eyes growing wide. "That's fucking sick, Wayne! Evie, you better not bail on us last second."

"I won't..." I mutter, dreading it already.

"Look at me," she orders in good ol' Annie fashion. "You are going as a sexy nurse. I have a costume you can borrow."

"I am not! I'm not doing sexy, I'll just... go as myself or something."

Annie and Wayne both titter at my response. "You poor thing, we'll convince you somehow. We've got, what? three weeks?"

"Five o'clock," Wayne says abruptly, straightening up in his seat.

Annie and I turn our heads, spotting Jemma Kelly seating herself down at a table with her clique. Ugh. They disgusted me; I had no idea why the guys were so obsessed with them after all of their antics. Beauty only ran skin deep.

"Seriously, Wayne? She's such a fucking bitch." Annie rolls her eyes. "Plus, you don't stand a chance. She doesn't date normal people, only douchebags and jocks."

"Thanks for the encouragement, Annie." He stands up. "I'm gonna go grab some lunch, perhaps I'll blow her away with one of my famous pick-up lines? Can't give up hope."

Once Wayne is out of ear shot, Annie shakes her head. "Does he not realise she's just not into guys like him? It's embarrassing."

"He's in denial..." I trail off distracted, my gaze falling on a face I

hadn't seen before. Sat on the edge of a table several yards away, clad in a pair of jeans and a leather jacket, his eyes meet mine for a brief second. From the distance, I can't make out what colour they are, but his lips are full and inviting. His dirty blonde mullet frames his strong, angular face and I would've stared a little longer had his gaze not made me uncomfortable.

Flushing upon the realisation that I'd been caught gawking at him, I ask Annie if she knows who he is.

She looks over her shoulder and thankfully he's no longer interested. "Oh he's the new guy, heard he's from Cali and moved over here last week. He's really hot, all the girls have a thing for him. Bit of a jerk though, likes throwing his weight around."

"What's his name?" I'm intrigued at this point. How did I not hear about a new arrival until now?

"I can't remember, something like, um, Joey? I'm not sure?" she takes a sip of her water, uninterested. "So, what should I wear Friday? Do you wanna come over and help me get ready? I want Alan salivating when he sees me."

"Of course, where you guys going? The movies?" I ask, the only place I can think of.

She smirks. "Almost right, the drive-in. It's opening tonight, they're showing Greece on Friday!"

"Your favourite, what a coincidence." I laugh. "I've never been to a drive-in before."

"Well you're gonna have to find a boyfriend soon so you can experience one, plus we can go on double dates. How cool would that be? Honestly, this is your year girl, I can feel it."

I roll my eyes. "Yeah... no."

"I swear Evie, you're seventeen now, this is the year of your life. I bet you anything, by the end of this year, you and Brian will be wearing the faces off each other." She giggles, giving me a wink. "He definitely likes you, I just think with him being such a player, he's afraid of

commitment, but he'll come around."

Brian was my current crush, six months and counting. He was tall, dark and handsome, his eyes the colour of sweet caramel, intoxicating and addictive. He hijacked my thoughts and my fantasies at night and every morning when he'd say hello, it'd send shivers down my spine, his voice reminding me of all the sweet nothings he'd whisper to me in my dreams.

"Somehow, I doubt that," I mumble, knowing I hadn't got a chance with a guy that good looking. "All of these super cute guys date the cute girls, you know, like Steve Harrington and Nancy Wheeler. They're practically made for each other."

She waves me off. "Eve, your lack of confidence is the only thing keeping you single. You are drop dead gorgeous and if you let me go shopping with you, even once, I can make you any boy's wet dream."

"I might just take you up on that offer; I'm due a little pampering. Starcourt trip next week?"

"Count me in." the devilish glint in Annie's eyes says it all.

Maybe I really could be pretty enough for Brian Crowe.

There's a cool chill as I enter the house and a faint smell of smoke. Shrugging off my jacket, I head into the kitchen but my mom is nowhere to be seen. What I do spot is a pot of burned rice which explains the foul smell lingering in the air.

Concerned, I run up the stairs to her room and knock gently. "Mom? You in there?"

"Come in honey."

I open the door and find her lying in bed, a glass of wine sitting on the bedside locker. She looks terrible. "Are you okay? I see you burned the rice. Was that... dinner?"

She nods, her black hair a raggy mess and eyes bloodshot as they meet mine. "I'm sorry honey, I dozed off and by the time I woke up, it

was too late. I know, I need to get my shit together, honey..." she sighs. "I'm ashamed of myself, you know that right? I keep letting you down, I'm such a fuckup."

This wasn't the first time this happened, nor would it be the last.

Ever since my father Jeffrey left us, my mom hasn't been the same. It's been six years now and she still hasn't picked herself up. Sometimes I'm led to believe that she's doing better, I'll come home and the dinner is cooking, the laundry is done and she's sober. But then it happens, completely out of the blue, and she's passed out on the couch with an empty bottle of wine. As the only child, I'm left to pick up the pieces and help her get back on her feet again, but lately it's been worse and she shows no signs of improving, no matter what I do or say.

She's broken my heart so many times now that I've lost track. I hate seeing her like this and it's the one thing I dread when I'm on my way home from school. Sometimes I'm afraid I'll lose her forever.

"Mom, it's okay." I sit down on the edge of the bed and take her cold hand in mine. "I'll fix us up something, but no more wine. Okay?"

"God no." she groans, squeezing her eyes shut. "I don't know what I'd do without you honey, lord knows I wouldn't make it this far."

My stomach twists. "Please don't say that mom."

"It's true, you're the only thing keeping me going. I almost didn't get up for work this morning, I hate that place."

She worked at the local laundrette, from eight to two. It was a boring job, I understood that, but it was paying our bills and keeping food on our plates. Without that job, she'd be far worse off.

"It can't be that bad, mom. Plus, it's good for you to get out, you'd hate sitting in a lot more."

"You're right." She shifts so that her head is resting against the headboard. "Oh yeah, I was speaking to a very nice lady today and she's looking for someone to babysit her daughter this Friday and every following Saturday starting tomorrow. I said you'd be there."

"Mom!" I can't believe this, she hadn't even consulted me.

"You said you wanted a part-time job! I can't turn her down now; she and her husband have plans. Don't be upset," she pleads.

I stand up, crossing my arms. "Who exactly is this? Where do they live? I... uh, I just... okay, fine."

"I don't remember the name, you'll find a note in my handbag with the details and address, but they're new here, came all the way from California. Isn't that crazy?"

The following evening after calling Annie to let her know I wouldn't make it to hers before her date, I pull up outside the Hargroves' home in my mom's Ford Sierra. I switch off the ignition and take a deep breath, this would be my first babysitting job and I honestly didn't know how I was going to handle it. According to the note from Susan, Max is thirteen years old and whether this would prove to be a good age or not, I've yet to find out.

I'd found out her brother's name was Billy through Wayne and apparently he was indeed a complete asshole. This didn't help matters for me as I wondered how the hell I was going to handle any awkward situations.

With a final inspection of myself in the rear-view mirror, I step out of the car and make my way up the pathway to the front door. The stairs creak beneath my feet, signalling my arrival and I wince in response.

I raise my fist to the door and knock three times.

The door is pulled open and an auburn haired lady stands there. "Eve, nice to meet you, come in." She steps aside and smiles at me as I enter, shutting the door behind me. "I see you drove over yourself, that's good to know. I always worry about babysitters walking home in the dark, it's not safe out there at night."

"Yeah, I borrowed my mom's car. But honestly, Hawkins is actually pretty safe, I don't even remember the last time something bad

happened." I cross my arms over my chest and bite my lip. "This is my first time babysitting, just thought I'd let you know."

She waves me off. "That's absolutely fine, Max is a really good kid, she won't cause you any trouble. Myself and Neil are going to a friend's tonight, we usually have Billy babysit but he's... he's not the best with kids and he's more into girls and cars and... you know, like all men are."

I nod in understanding. "Yeah, they're all the same. Boys will be boys."

"Why don't you take a seat and I'll have Max come down and introduce herself." She gestures to the bright yellow sofa in the corner of the room. "I'll only be a minute."

As I wait, I shrug off my denim jacket and watch the TV. Greece is playing and I chuckle to myself, thinking of Annie and her hot date tonight. It was almost comical how I ended up babysitting some kid while she was making out with a cute guy in the back of his car. Wayne was right, I really did need to let loose and be a teenager, but neither he or Annie had pressing matters at home like I did. Someday my day would come, perhaps my prince too.

"Max, this is Eve, she'll be looking after you tonight," Susan says to the young redhead as they enter the room.

"Hey, Max, nice to meet you." I smile, sticking my hand out for her to shake.

She eyes me warily before accepting. "Hi."

Heavy footsteps make their way from the kitchen into the living Room. Mr. Hargrove. "Max, no trouble alright?" he warns, shrugging into his jacket, completely ignoring me. "There's leftover pizza in the fridge if you're hungry."

Max turns to her father, shoulders hunched. "Okay dad."

He nods once before turning to the door, Susan following closely behind. "See you later girls," she mumbles.

When the door closes behind them, Max's posture relaxes and she turns back around to face me. "Um, do you want me to show you around?"

Max shows me around the house but trying to get her to open up was difficult. She was very reserved and seemed to be on her guard. I put this down to her strict upbringing and hoped that I could help her relax a little, thirteen wasn't an easy age.

We're in her bedroom when she speaks. "That's my stepbrother."

I pick up the picture frame, studying it. A family portrait. "Oh, you're not blood related? I didn't realise."

"No." She sits down on the edge of her bed. "My mom met Neil two years ago, they got married in July and decided to move out here to Hawkins, where he grew up."

"Where were you before?" I ask, pretending I didn't know the answer.

"California, I miss it so much."

I frown, coming to sit next to her. "How come you guys left?"

"Well," she starts with a heavy sigh. "My mom wanted to get away from my dad, he was causing problems and stuff. So Neil got his job relocated to Hawkins and here we are. It sucks."

"Sounds rough. But you'll make friends and honestly, friends are everything. Sometimes they make a place, no matter how bad it is."

"I don't know, all I can think about is my best friends and the beach, it's just not the same around here. Feels like we're in the middle of nowhere."

I chuckle at that. "You have a point, we are in the middle of nowhere. But, there's this really cool candy store about five minutes away and a Rent a Movie next door, we could go over and buy some candy and pick out a film?"

She perks up at that, a tiny smile tugging at the corners of her lips, her blue eyes brighter. "Really? Awesome!"

When we arrive back at the house we've got popcorn, fizzy sweets, tortilla chips and pepsi. Max picked out the movie Star Wars, because it's her favourite and apparently she's watched it twenty times but wants to watch it again because it's been a while. She makes me laugh and seeing her happy made me relax a little. Maybe I was actually good at this.

As the door clicks shut behind us, Max freezes and as I'm about to ask her what the matter is, I hear it. Paranoid by Black Sabbath is on full blast in Billy's room.

"Shit. I didn't think he'd be back so early," she says, rolling her eyes. "He's such an asshole. If he was on babysitting duty he'd want to be as far away from me as possible. Ugh."

"You know what, he probably won't even know we're here," I reassure her, heading for the living room. "I'll grab a bowl for the popcorn and you can set up the movie, yeah?"

She nods and I head for the kitchen.

Twenty minutes into the movie and my bladder is about to explode. I'd been putting off going because I didn't want to bump into Billy, but my time had finally run out, I couldn't hold it any longer.

Excusing myself, I head for the bathroom and I'm assaulted by a strong smell of cigarette smoke. I cough, knowing that he can't hear me with the music turned up so loud and scurry inside.

As I'm washing my hands, the handle of the door turns. I freeze, knowing it could only be Billy and wait for him to walk away. There's a minute of silence and as I reach for the towel to dry my hands, I hear the music being switched off. Heavy footsteps follow and then there's pounding on the door. "Max! Get out!"

I walk up to the door and pause, dreading the thought of facing him. He slams his fist on the door again and I quickly open up, my gaze meeting eyes the colour of the ocean, framed by long, thick lashes. His cheeks are flushed red and a sheen of sweat coats his forehead, full lips parted, his words catching in his throat.

Struck by his beauty, I stand there and I allow my gaze to fall, taking in his glistening bare chest. I had never been so close to a half naked man and I can't pull my eyes away from his erect nipples, the musky smell of his body invading my senses, clogging up my brain.

"And what have we got here?" he drawls, voice low. I snap out of my reverie and I look up into his face, a grin playing on his lips. "Are you lost, darlin'?"

"I'm b-babysitting Max," I stutter, my heartbeat picking up its pace.

"First I heard." His jaw clenches, visibly annoyed by this revelation. "Funny, I didn't see you when I got in."

"We went to the store."

He leans against the door-frame, narrowing his eyes at me. "Yeah? which store?"

"Bobby's Candy Store."

"Billy?" we're interrupted by an annoying whiny voice and I see a blonde girl standing by his bedroom door, her dignity covered only by a grey bed sheet. "Can I use it now?"

I realise it was her who had tried to enter the bathroom. The whole situation was extremely awkward for me and her lack of clothing had me squeezing past Billy and heading for the living room before I missed the opportunity. "Sorry," I mutter as I pass her by.

"Loser," I hear her say as I'm about to enter the living room.

I shut the door behind me and Max looks up, frowning. "What's wrong?" As I fill Max in on the encounter, she cringes. "Gross! He takes girls back here when my mom and Neil are out. It's so annoying!"

"Does this happen every weekend?" I ask, grabbing the bowl of popcorn off the coffee table and slump onto the sofa next to her.

"Not every weekend, but most." She rolls her eyes. "He's such a pain in the ass."

"Maybe next time he's around I'll take you to the cinema or something?" I suggest, feeling such sorrow for a child to be dealing with situations like these. "I'll ask your parents, we could go to Burger King after or Scoops Ahoy."

She smiles brightly at me. "You'd do that?"

"Sure, I... dealt with some bad stuff when I was your age and I wish someone had taken me away for a few hours, you know? So I'd like to do that for you. Maybe you could ask a friend to join us if you like?"

"Oh my gosh, yes! totally!" She leans in to give me a quick hug and I chuckle. "You're the best!"

Max's spirit had lifted and halfway through the movie, she nods off to sleep, her head on my shoulder.

There was no reappearance from Billy or the blonde and I assumed they had snuck back out before Susan and Neil returned. Probably through his bedroom window or something cliché like that.

As hard as it was to admit to myself, Billy was incredibly good looking.

It was such a shame his beauty only ran skin deep.

2. Chapter 2: Prey

Chapter 2: Prey

Babysitting had gone well, surprisingly.

Max was a good kid. A little difficult to talk to, seeing as she was very reserved, but put her in front of a TV screen surrounded by junk food and she was a happy camper. But the happiness was brief; I could see that she was angry inside, probably with the fact that her mom married some stranger who moved her miles away from home. And with Billy as a stepbrother, it only made matters worse.

We didn't see or hear from Billy for the rest of the night, he left about an hour after the awkward encounter I'd had with him and the blonde, much to both mine and Max's relief.

"So like, he's just banging chicks left, right and centre?" Annie chuckles, swirling her straw around in her strawberry milkshake. "Walking STD alert."

I shiver at the thought. "You're probably right, I wonder if he has any children yet."

She laughs. "And the father of the year award goes to..."

"Honestly though, it's such a toxic environment for Max to be growing up in. The way he ordered her to get out of the toilet, you know, when he didn't realise it was me in there, that's awful."

"I wonder if her parents are around much," Annie pondered, taking a sip of her milkshake.

"Well, her stepdad seemed... strict and her mom was pretty much cowering behind him, so I'd say Billy didn't lick it off the stones. Like father, like son." I sigh, shaking my head. "I feel so sorry for Max."

"Yeah, it's a shitty situation," she agreed. "You back there next Saturday?"

I roll my eyes. "Yep, dreading it."

As I lift the spoonful of chocolate ice-cream to my lips, the glass doors open and Brian Crow - A.K.A my husband - enters Scoops Ahoy, flanked by his two best buddies Henry and David. The deliciousness of the ice-cream perfectly matched the sexiness he exuded and I couldn't keep my eyes off his perfectly sculpted body, his white t-shirt a size too small, his nipples hard.

Annie waves a hand in my face. "Hellooooo?"

I blink. "Huh?"

She twists her body around to find the cause of my distraction. "Oh for God's sake, seriously?"

I giggle. "What? I'm not allowed to admire the goods?"

"It's fine to take a look, Eve, but don't get caught. You want him to think you're not that into him, that's how guys fall for you."

"As if that's going to happen, I'm way out of his league."

"He'll never fall for you with that attitude. Sit up straight and focus on me," she orders and I laugh, finding it all so ridiculous. "I'm serious!"

Following her command, I do as she says and try to force my eyes from wandering. But from my peripheral vision, I can see that he's seated at the the very last booth down the far end of the room, his back to me.

"It's so difficult *not* to look," I whine. "You get to go on dates with Alan! I don't stop you!"

She smirks. "I'm on phase two, if you want to get to phase two with Brian you're gonna have to try your best to look at your best friend instead."

I cross my arms, fake-sulking. "Whatever. So how was your hot date yesterday?"

"Well," she starts, a gleam in her eye. "We got to second base in the back of his car. He wanted more, *obviously*, but I made him wait."

"Is he a good kisser?"

"So good! He asked me out again when he dropped me off last night, I'm going to his place next month in Fort Wayne. His parents are out of town so it'll just be the two of us."

I purse my lips. "Isn't it a little early? you know, to be going all the way to Fort Wayne with a guy you barely know?"

She shrugs. "I really like him, Evie. It'll be fun. I'm not an innocent little virgin like you, it's different."

"I hate that word," I mutter.

"You love it really," she teases, wiggling her eyebrows. "There's something so exciting about being a virgin, the mystery of sex and who you'll lose it to. Could it be Brian? or maybe someone new? Billy Hargrove?"

"Shut up!"

"You know, maybe sparks will fly between you two, all cooped up in that little house. I'm sure he's checked you out, you might not be flashy like all the girls he's hooking up with, but you've got great boobs. Even *I'll* admit that."

My face is bright red at this point. "Annie, seriously, drop it."

She throws her head back, laughing. "It's too easy to get you all flustered. So *virginal*."

I cringe at her use of that word, but her voice disappears into the background as my eyes fall on Brian sauntering towards our booth. My breath catches in my throat, my brain struggling to process the fact that he's actually looking at me, a grin on his lips, his eyes dark and inviting.

"Ladies," he greets us both with a dazzling smile, hands behind his back. "How are we doing tonight?"

"Great, now that you're here," Annie replies sarcastically.

"Feeling's mutual, Kelleher."

Although she never admitted it to me, I knew Annie disliked Brian and I had no idea why. I understood that he was arrogant and a typical rich kid, but he was always very charming with us and had never done anything to purposely hurt us. It was especially strange, considering how she knew I had a huge crush on him.

She wanted me to lure him in but she was ruining my chances with her foul attitude whenever I had the opportunity.

"You know, I really need a smoke," she says, pushing her milkshake away and slipping out of the booth. "I'll catch you in a few, Evie."

I look up at Brian and he frowns, running a hand through his silky black hair. "She likes me, right?" he jokes.

I shake my head, my face burning with embarrassment. "I don't know why she's like that, I'm really sorry, Brian."

He slips into Annie's seat and leans forward, his voice low. "At least I get you all to myself."

His words send a shiver through my body and I part my lips, but no words form. I know he's teasing me, it's obvious that I like him and he's enjoying this little game.

Think Evie, think!

"W-What brings you here? I've never seen you at Scoops Ahoy before," I manage to say, the best I could come up with.

"I could ask you the same question," he replies, winking.

"Well, the ice-cream is pretty good."

He chuckles. "Yours is melting, Evie. Mustn't be that good, maybe you've seen something you prefer?"

My heart is racing and I can feel my clothes starting to stick to my skin. "I like it melted." I scoop up a mouthful and bring the spoon to my lips. "Tastes better."

"I can't take your word for it, mind if I try some?"

"Of course," I breathe, my shaky hand handing him the plastic utensil. My stomach is in knots and I'm almost sure I'm about to faint any minute now.

He doesn't break eye contact with me as he very slowly tastes the ice-cream, licking his lips once he's swallowed it. "That was... *delicious*."

I bite my lip. "Should've believed me."

"Well," he starts, giving me that million dollar smile. "Would you believe me if I said riding in my mustang in the middle of the night beats sitting right here in this ice-cream parlor?"

There's a pause before I pluck up the courage to give him the *right* answer. "No, I-I'd have to try it."

"I was hoping you'd say that, Eve." He reaches across the table, laying his tan hand over mine where it rests. "How about tomorrow night I pick you up, around nine?"

Holy shit.

I swallow thickly, thinking it through, remembering all of the advice Annie had given me leading up to this moment. "I... I can't do tomorrow, but I can do Sunday next week?"

He cocks his head to the side. "You *can't* do tomorrow? are you *sure*?"

"I'm sure," I mumble, looking away, knowing he can see right through my lie.

"If you say so." He retracts his hand from mine and moves to stand up. "Sunday next week, see you then."

I hadn't realized I was holding my breath until he walked away.

The rest of the week passed me by in a blur. Brian had left me in a daze and all I could think about was Sunday. I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat and I certainly couldn't think straight. My performance in

class had declined and I had no interest in any of my hobbies.

I was so distracted that on Friday afternoon after PE I hadn't noticed a familiar blonde waiting for me in the locker room until I was standing right in front of my locker.

"Oh!" I shriek, my towel falling from my hands to the floor.

"Thought I recognised you." She gives me a once-over and I'm suddenly painfully aware of my near-nakedness, clad in only a sports bra and shorts. "Listen, what you saw last weekend never happened. Understood?"

I nod. "Sure. Absolutely."

"I'm serious, if anyone catches wind of that night, you'll be sorry." She leans in, her hot breath fanning my face. "I know where you live, bitch and I know your crazy mom."

Flinching at her words, I take a step back. But my blood is already starting to boil at the mention of my mother. No one disrespects my mother. "How dare you," I hiss, hands now balled in to fists. "You mention my mother again and everyone in Hawkins will know about you and Billy."

"Listen bitch." She steps forward until I'm backed up against the locker. "I'll fuck you and your mom up, I don't mess around. You see this-" she pulls her t-shirt up to reveal a nasty scar on her belly "-this is what you'll get on your pretty little face if you utter a single word. Understand?"

I'm trembling with fury, but I nod. "I understand."

"Good girl."

Upset and humiliated, I'm glad that PE was our last class. I hurry out of the building, my whole body trembling and make a beeline for my car. I'm searching for my keys in the pockets of my jeans when he appears, his reflection in the window startling me. I spin around to face him, my heart racing. "Oh!"

His golden earring gleams in the sunlight and he darts his tongue out,

trailing it over his bottom lip. "Babysitting Max get you all stressed? or are you still thinkin' about my body?"

"I... can I help you?"

"If you want, darlin'." He reaches out, pushing a strand of hair from my face. "You babysitting Max tomorrow night?"

"Yeah." I nod, my cheeks burning red. "I a-am."

"Good." He smiles, flashing his pearly whites. "See, I've got a hot date tomorrow evening and I can't have you bailing on me."

"I'll be there," I whisper, my voice trembling.

"You know, you're Max's new favourite person." He takes a step forward so that we're inches apart and bends down, his lips pressed against my ear. "I must say, I'm a *little* jealous."

His hot breath on my skin sends a shiver down my spine. I open my lips to speak but I'm unable to form any words.

"Billy! Come on!" I hear someone yell and he pulls away from me, giving me a wink before strutting away towards Tommy and Carol. "What were you doing with *her*?" I hear Tommy ask as Carol shoots me a dirty look.

I quickly get into my car and drive away, needing to get as far away from that building as possible. Things had come so messy.

What had I gotten myself into by babysitting Max?

The following evening I pull up outside the Hargroves' and rush up the front door, running about ten minutes late. I was never late to anything, ever, but after that confrontation with bimbo-head, Billy and finding my mom passed out on the sofa this morning with an empty bottle of wine yet again, I was seriously stressed out.

I knock and the door is pulled open by Mr. Neil Hargrove himself, his brown eyes cold. "You're the babysitter, am I right?"

I nod. "Yes, sorry I'm late, hope I didn't delay you or anything..."

"No, that's fine, you see Max is... missing. It isn't anything out of the ordinary, she's quite a rebellious child, so we've sent Billy to look for her." He sighs. "But Billy... can't be relied upon, so myself and Susan would be very grateful if you could stop by the Wheeler's place, she's probably there. We'll pay you extra."

I ponder over their offer for a second before I shrug. "Sure, I haven't got anything better to be doing anyway."

"Do you need directions?" he asks, lifting an eyebrow.

"No it's fine, I'm familiar with the Wheelers."

"Great." He fishes a pair of keys from his pocket and hands them to me. "To let yourself and Max in, thanks again."

"No problem, anytime," I say, offering him a fake smile before bidding him goodbye and heading back to my car.

This whole thing sounded absolutely ridiculous to me and I wondered what exactly Max's parents were doing when she slipped away unnoticed. She was clearly neglected and sending Billy out to look for her was even worse, God only knows what he'd do to her once he'd found her...

Unfortunately Max wasn't at the Wheelers and an irritated Karen sent me to the Byers' instead.

As I drive up the lonely road towards the Byers' place, Bette Davis Eyes by Kim Carnes' is playing on the radio and I turn the volume up, singing along to one of my all time favourite songs. In my head I imagine it playing the first time I kiss Brian and how sweet that would be, the thought itself giving me butterflies. Two more days until I got to ride with him in his Mustang, it couldn't come quick enough...

The Byers' house was creepy, always had been. I couldn't understand why they'd want to live so far away from everyone, surrounded by the woods and whatever lurked deep within them. I shiver as I step out of the car and scan the area, not a soul to be seen.

As I walk up to the porch I notice the front door is ajar and that despite the lights being on, there was complete silence. I pause on the first step, my heart sinking into my stomach as my gut screams *abort mission!* But I can't find it in me to walk away, something was up and if anything, I needed to call the police.

Very quietly, I walk up to the door and with a shaky hand I push it open slowly, wincing as it creaks on its hinges. I hold my breath, watching it open to reveal the living room and... Billy Hargrove's body laying flat on the ground.

"Oh my God!" I shriek, running in and dropping to my knees next to him. Pressing my fingers to his bloody neck, I can feel his steady heartbeat and I breathe a sigh of relief. *He's alive, I can do this, he's going to be okay, I've got this*, I tell myself. Upon further inspection to his face and body, I can tell he's been in a fight and the state of his raw knuckles has my stomach turning.

What the hell happened here? and where the hell was everyone?

"Billy," I say, shaking his shoulders. "Can you hear me?"

He groans in response, his lids opening halfway, eyes unfocused. "M-Max?"

"No, not Max. Are you okay?" I ask, pressing my hand to his cheek, his skin cold.

"Mkay," he responds, his speech slurred.

"I'm gonna call the police okay and -"

"No pol-police," he whines. "P-Please."

My eyes widen. "Why? you need help."

"It's... okay."

I attempt to drag his body out of the front door but I'm far too weak and resort to asking him to stand up. After a couple of attempts, he manages to stand unsteadily on his feet and I throw his arm over my shoulder. We stumble out the door towards the car and I help him

into the back seat.

When we reach the Hargoves', his Camaro is parked up outside. This puzzles me as it hadn't been there before and it was nowhere to be seen near the Byers' place. I needed to find out what the hell was going on and locate Max before her parents returned.

I get out of the car and open the back door where Billy is sitting, he's still out of it. "Billy," I whisper as I lean in and shake his shoulder gently. "Billy, wake up."

He moans and reaches out to me, gripping my forearm weakly. "Who... 're you?"

"Eve, Max's babysitter." I give him a small smile as his eyes open, taking in his surroundings. "I need you to try and walk for me, I can't carry your weight by myself."

"What.. the fuck is this?" he asks groggily, his hand falling back into his lap.

"We'll talk about it later, just need you to get out of the car first." I grab his arm and throw it over my shoulder. "Come on."

We struggle for a minute but he manages to get out of the car and we stagger up to the house slowly. Once we're inside, I lead him into his bedroom and help him onto the bed. The room smells strongly of cigarettes and cologne, the walls adorned with band memorabilia and glamour girl posters. Funnily enough, it's exactly how I imagined it to look.

He lays there, his unfocused eyes watching me as I move quickly to the end of the bed, untying his laces and pulling his boots off. A task which proved extremely difficult and nearly knocked me onto my butt. Breathless, I glance up at his face and the corners of his lips are turned up in amusement. He was definitely regaining consciousness, slowly but surely.

I leave the room to fetch him a glass of water and I find Max in the kitchen. Startled, I place my hand over my chest. "Max! You scared me!"

She crosses her arms, looking sheepish. "Sorry..."

"Max, what happened earlier?" I rush over to her, scanning her face. "I need to know, your brother is not okay right now. Who knocked him out?"

"Nobody knocked him out." she snorts. "I drugged him."

My eyes widen. "You what!"

"I had to! He came looking for me and almost hurt my friend Lucas, then he started attacking Steve and he wouldn't stop like, so like, I had to do *something*... so I drugged him with one of..." her eyes shift awkwardly. "Joyce's syringes. They're just to sedate someone if they're, you know, out of control. The Byers' are a bit strange, uh, don't ask."

"Do you even know if that's what they said it is, Max? That's so weird, Seriously, I..." I pace the room, raking a hand through my hair. "I might need to call an ambulance."

She runs to the kitchen door and shuts it, her back pressed against it. "No! You can't! My stepdad will kill us both."

"So we're just going to wait and see? oh my God, this is not what I signed up for. Why weren't you here when I arrived? you knew I was babysitting tonight."

"I didn't realise what time it was, I swear!"

I shake my head, bewildered. "Look, we can talk about this later okay? I need to make sure Billy is alright before your parents get back."

"He'll be fine," she insists with a roll of her eyes. "He's a jerk, he deserved it. You should've seen Steve's face, it was really bad..."

"Steve Harrington?"

She nods.

"Max... I don't know what to say." I rummage through the cabinets,

grabbing what I need to make them both a sandwich. I hadn't realised my hands were shaking until I grabbed a knife and attempted to spread peanut butter over the bread. "Are you hungry?"

"I guess." She pulls out a chair and sits down. "You don't have to do this, you know."

"I want to. I'm used to looking after people." I sigh, setting a plate down in front of her.

She looks up at me. "What do you mean?"

"It's a long story... Now eat up, I'll be back in a minute," I say, grabbing a glass of water and a sandwich. "We'll talk when I get back."

Upon my return, Billy has now positioned himself so that the back of his head rests against the headboard. His tired gaze meets mine as I set the plate and glass down on the bedside locker. "You are a *lifesaver*, you know that," he whispers, his eyes threatening to close again.

I wave him off. "It's nothing, I'm glad you're... recovering. If you need anything just-"

"Water."

"Sure." I grab the glass and sit myself down next to him on the bed. Under normal circumstances, I wouldn't have dared come within such close proximity to Billy, but he wasn't quite himself at the moment. "Do you need help or are you too tired?"

He reaches for the water in my hand, but his grip is too weak. "Fuck... sake."

"It's okay, I can help." I scoot up so that I'm closer to him and after a brief moment of contemplation, I tentatively reach out and hold his cheek in my left hand, his stubble tickling my skin. Leaning closer, I hold my breath and our eyes meet; his ocean blue orbs, framed by the most luscious lashes I'd ever seen on a man, drawing me in. He smells of cologne with a faint hit of hairspray, his curly locks the perfect frame for his handsome face. I pause, losing my train of

thought for a second, before I snap out of it and bring the glass up to his parted lips.

He gulps the water down before leaning his head back again and I quickly stand up, setting it aside. Turning to him, I find him watching me again and offer him a smile. "You should rest up, everything's okay. Max is here."

"Max..." he groans before closing eyes. "Okay."

I head for the door and turn the light off. "Goodnight, Billy."

"G'night... mom."

As I close the door over gently, a sadness overcomes me at his last words.

Who was Billy's mom?

Billy

When Billy awakes, it's 3am and he's drenched in sweat. He doesn't quite remember how he ended up in his room and as he shifts in his king sized bed, the mattress creaks in the quiet, not a sound to be heard in the Hargrove house.

With a grunt, he unbuttons his maroon shirt and shrugs out of it, throwing it to the floor, his jeans following. His knuckles ache and he grins, the feeling so very familiar. In his mind he sees Steve Harrington's bloody face and the thrill each blow gave him, because in Billy's eyes it wasn't Harrington he was seeing.

Guilt twists his gut for a brief second, but he shrugs it off. Feeling any type of remorse was weak. Billy wasn't weak.

But he felt weak when Max had sedated him and he gave in to her command to leave her and her friends alone. "I understand," he'd said. The memory makes him cringe and he can feel his blood starting to boil. How dare she reduce him to that, in front of everyone.

"Fucking little bitch," he mutters to himself, reaching out to switch on the

lamp. The room lights up and his eyes fall on an uneaten sandwich and a glass of water on the bedside locker. Frowning, he picks up the plate and inspects it – peanut butter & jelly. It had been years since anyone had made him one of those. It reminded him of his mother and simpler days.

And then he sees her; doe-like eyes and a pretty smile, her soft hand on his cheek. She smelt of fresh cotton sheets and her touch had felt like home.

Innocent and sweet, she would never come within such close proximity to him again. He knew what he was, her face the first time she had seen him outside the bathroom door had said it all, the half-naked slut standing in the hallway only made matters worse – she was too good for him.

But now that he'd had a taste.

He wanted more.

3. Chapter 3: The First Time

Chapter 3: The First Time

I struggled to sleep that night, plagued by nightmares of Billy dying in his sleep and Max going missing. The excitement I'd had in anticipation of my evening with Brian had all but dissipated. I was uneasy and incredibly stressed; it seemed I could never catch a break.

When I jolted awake for the third time at eight in the morning, I wasn't even going to attempt to fall back asleep again and decided to take a shower instead, hoping somehow, I could wash it all away.

"You're up early," my mom says as I walk into the kitchen, tightening my pink bathrobe closed. She's buttering up some toast and I inhale the delicious scent of bacon and fried eggs. "Take a seat, I'll just be a minute."

The sight of her looking happy and healthy brought me so much joy and immediately a weight had lifted off my shoulders, maybe this time she would come back to being herself. I had to believe that, no matter how many times I had been disappointed.

Taking a seat at our dining table, she sets down my breakfast in front of me. Her green eyes are glowing and she appears to have gained some weight. "Thanks mom."

"Tea or coffee?" she asks as she walks away.

"Coffee, I didn't sleep well last night."

She shoots me a look of concern. "How come, honey?"

"Just..." I pause, something inside of me not wanting to share what had happened last night. "I have a date tonight, sort of."

"My little girl is all grown up!" She exclaims excitedly as she potters around the kitchen. "Who is the lucky fella?"

"Um, his name is Brain." I stare down at my food, playing at it with my fork.

"Is he cute?"

I blush. "Yes."

"Is he older?"

"No, he's sixteen; we're in the same Math class."

"Well, sometimes dating someone your own age is a good thing. You're both at the same stage in your lives and can relate to each other in ways that can be difficult to with an older person." She heads back over to me and takes a seat. "Where is he taking you?"

I figure telling her about a ride in his car is not a good idea. "We're... going to the cinema."

"Okay, that's good." she nods thoughtfully. "Come straight home though, okay? Your curfew is at ten."

"Mom, seriously?" I roll my eyes. "I haven't had a curfew in like, two years. You can trust me."

"Of course I trust you, honey." She smiles warmly. "It's him I don't trust."

We make small talk as we eat our breakfast and I've almost forgotten about last night until she brings the Hargrove's up, asking me how I'm getting on. I insist that I'm enjoying the job and that Max is like a little sister to me, but I deliberately leave Billy out of the equation.

I didn't quite understand why I was protecting him; after all, I was pretty open with my mom on her good days. But she was strict when it came to boys, always has been and with Billy being older and so rebellious, I had a feeling she'd be calling Susan up to complain. My mom could be a little overprotective at times.

After all, I did have a curfew tonight. *Jeez.*

Finishing up, I excuse myself and head up to my room. I flop onto my king sized bed and stare at the golden butterfly lampshade hanging from the ceiling, finding solace inside these pale pink walls.

The sunshine creeps in through the window, peeking out from the grey clouds and it makes me long for summer again.

But my thoughts keep drifting to Billy so I force myself to get dressed and clean my room.

He was fine. Surely.

Right?

Right?

By two o'clock I can't take it anymore and fish out Susan's note with their phone number scribbled on it and head for the hallway downstairs, picking up the phone. I dial the number and with bated breath, wait for someone to pick up.

"Hello?"

"Max! it's me, Eve."

"Hey!" I can hear the smile in her voice.

"Hey! Listen, I don't mean to disturb you but I couldn't stop worrying last night... is Billy okay?"

She lowers her voice to a whisper. "Looks fine to me, still a dick."

I sag with relief. "Thank God! I was just... afraid that maybe I should've taken him to hospital. But he's okay, that's good to hear."

"I wouldn't worry-" she's cut off and I can hear Billy in the background. Their words are muffled but I can tell he's annoyed. "No, Billy! Stop!" she yells.

More scuffling is heard before he speaks, his voice crystal clear. "Is that you Sinclair?"

"It's Eve. Max's babysitter," I say, a knot forming in my stomach. "I just called to check in on you guys after... last night."

"How *incredibly* thoughtful of you, Eve."

"Yeah, um, I'm glad you... you're both okay. I'll see you."

"You bet, darlin'."

I quickly hang up before he says anything else and I stare at the phone with wide eyes, my cheeks burning.

It's 8 o'clock and I'm sitting at my vanity, applying a pink lip. I'm wearing my favourite yellow dress and smell strongly of Opium by Yves Saint Laurent – thanks to my mom.

I'm nervous and hot and I've had to apply deodorant three times just as a precaution. I definitely didn't want Brian to get a smell of armpit off me. That was the last thing I needed.

My mom's out with my aunt Phoebe and I thank my lucky stars she's not around to judge either me or Brian. I loved my mom, but she was very blunt and sometimes quite hurtful. Not to mention overprotective. She was difficult when it came to dating. Not to mention how awkward the talk had been.

Honking sounding outside alerts me to Brian's arrival. I take a deep breath.

Breathe, Eve. Breathe.

The moment I'd waited so long for was finally here.

I skip down the stairs and let myself out, rushing over to his white mustang, a nervous smile on my face.

"Hey," I greet him as I enter the car, shutting the door behind me.

He's wearing a beige shirt and his black hair is slicked back. His cologne is intoxicating and his smile dazzling. "You look stunning tonight, Eve." He reaches out, runs his fingers through my wavy hair. "I've never seen you with your hair down. Suits you."

"Thanks." I blush, finding it hard to think with him being so close.

"I've been thinking about this all week, you and me. Alone," he

whispers, his hand moving from my hair to cup my cheek. "Your pretty face."

His eyes flicker from my eyes to my lips and having never been kissed before, I giggle nervously.

I actually freaking giggle!

He blinks, the moment ruined. "Ready for a little joyride?"

I nod. Disappointed he hasn't kissed me, knowing it was my fault.

We drive for a while, Hawkins Pop Radio 8.612 playing tunes in the background. We cruise around the town and up back roads I'd never seen before. The ride so smooth, almost as smooth as Brian. By next year he would be the King of Hawkins High.

I'd never had a boyfriend before or even held a boy's hand. I wasn't like Annie; so full of life and confidence. It had taken me a while to build my confidence, to understand who I was and what I wanted. I'd shy away from boys and their advances.

I think part of me was afraid of letting someone in. Romantically.

Ever since dad had left us... life had never been the same.

Brian pulls up outside a red brick house and I turn to him. "Where are we?"

"My place, babe." He smirks and switches off the ignition. "I figured since my 'rents were outta town, you might feel more comfortable indoors."

"Oh," is all I can muster, my heart rate picking up.

His place.

Did he expect me to sleep with him?

Did I want to?

I follow him out of the car and as we walk into the house, I realise

how weak my knees have gone, every step almost a struggle. Inside the hallway it's warm and smells of exotic incense. Amber wallpaper and gold picture frames encasing photos of a very happy family adorn the walls. Brian is an only child.

He leads me into the front room and gestures towards the brown leather sofa. "Take a seat, I'll be right back."

I sit down and wait for him, my hands shaky and a layer of sweat forming on my upper lip. I'm more nervous than excited, which surprises me, but it was probably like this for every girl on her first romantic outing.

Brian returns with two bottles of beer, handing me one. "Don't tell me you don't drink?"

"Sometimes," I say, accepting the drink.

He sits down next to me, throwing his arm over the backrest. "Relax, babe. I don't bite."

"I'm fine..."

"You've always been so clean cut, Eve. some even calling you a loser." I flinch at the word and he chuckles. "Don't get offended, I don't see you like that, *obviously*. I find you quite captivating."

I resist the urge to roll my eyes. "You don't have to say that Brian, I get it, I am kind of a loser. But I'm happy the way I am, less drama."

"I'm not just saying it, I mean it." He scoots closer. "And you're really pretty Eve, even prettier than Natalie and Jenny, but you hide behind your books and your invisible clothing, nobody even notices, but I do. You notice me too right?"

"Y-Yeah, I do," I admit, my voice small as butterflies assault my stomach.

"For how long have you noticed me?" he asks, watching me intently.

I take another swig out of the bottle. "A while... you?"

"A long time, babe." He cups my cheek in his hand. "I don't take it you've been with a lot of guys before, right?"

"No." I bite my lip, his close proximity driving me crazy.

He leans in, his forehead touching mine. "Would I be your first?"

I nod, his intoxicating smell flooding my senses now and with hardly any time to react, he slams his lips to mine and kisses me hungrily. His hand slides down my neck to my chest, lingering there and I tense, everything happening so fast. He presses his tongue to my lips, demanding access and I part them, his tongue delving into my mouth, sliding against mine.

His lips tasted of mint and as I became accustomed to his kisses, I managed to find a rhythm with him, our tongues dancing together. My arms reach up and tangle behind his neck, pulling him closer to me and the bottle in my hand falls to the floor, neither of us reacting.

He gently pushes me onto my back and climbs on top of me, devouring my mouth, his hand closing around my breast. I moan in response, my fingers combing through his silky black hair and I part my legs for him to settle between them.

"I'm so hot for you, babe," he whispers, trailing kisses down my neck, sucking the skin softly.

Hazy eyed, I stare up at the ceiling unseeing, consumed completely by my lust for Brian. His fingers and lips on my skin were driving me crazy and a fire was burning between my thighs. I could've spent forever in this moment.

A knock on the door brings us back to reality.

"Just ignore it," he whispers against my collarbone, trailing his kisses southwards, but the knocking continues. "God dammit!"

He pushes himself up off me and storms out of the room. I sit up, listening as he unlocks the door and greets his visitor. My lips swollen.

"Tommy? what's up?"

Fuck. Not Tommy of all people.

"Hey amigo, I need a place to crash tonight. Sister's thrown me out and I can't find my fucking keys."

A pause.

"Are you gonna let me in or what?"

"Uh... it's not a great time, Tommy. I've got a chick over."

He whistles. "Gotta hand it to you man, ladies love you. Promise you won't even know I'm there."

"Okay, we're down here so... maybe head up to the spare room for now?" Brian suggests, his voice wavering.

"In the living room? Nice to switch things up, eh." Tommy laughs as he enters. The door clicking shut behind him. "Catch you later man, appreciate it."

Brian re-enters the room as Tommy's footsteps are heard making their way up the stairs. He rubs the back of his neck. "Sorry, I couldn't turn him down. He's a friend, y'know?"

I nod and stand up, not quite feeling it any more with Tommy around. "It's fine, do you mind taking me back home?"

He jams his hands in his pockets, his neck turning red. "You don't wanna... continue?"

"It's not the same with him being here. I'm sorry, Brian." I cross my arms, suddenly feeling vulnerable. A naked feeling I can't quite describe.

"Fine." He sighs and turns on his heel. "Tommy, be back in five!"

"Kay!" Tommy calls back.

I follow him into the hallway and wait for him to shrug his blue bomber jacket on. As we're leaving, I turn to shut the door behind us and catch Tommy's eyes. He's standing on the landing upstairs,

watching me with a grin on his face.

Shutting the door quickly, I silently curse myself for allowing him to see me. Now everyone in Hawkins would know about tonight.

Monday morning passes by achingly slowly, Wayne and Annie were both late and I hadn't bumped into them between classes. I got through my lessons with my head down, avoiding eye contact with as many people as I possibly could in fear of them having already heard through the grapevine about last night.

It wasn't that I was ashamed, being with Brian wasn't something any of the girls at Hawkins High would want to keep quiet about, but it was the newfound attention that I was terrified of. I was a closeted introvert.

Not only that, but I was also dreading seeing Billy again. Talking on the phone had been embarrassing enough, I didn't know what I was going to say if he approached me. Billy was so intimidating.

It was after Physics while I was rifling through my locker when I saw him again, leaning against the locker next to mine.

Startled, I almost dropped my books. "Jesus!"

He grins, chewing on gum. "Wrong guy, darlin."

Clad in a leather jacket and blue shirt unbuttoned at the top, I can't help but sneak a glance at his muscular chest. Undoubtedly sexy, I force myself not to think of him like that. He was not a nice guy. He was not a friend. "You've... recovered I see."

"All thanks to you." He winks. "I was wondering if you'd maybe do me a favour?"

Oh crap. "Depends..."

"See I really need to pass Biology this year and you're a smart girl, I was wondering if you'd help a guy out? Might not be the same grade but I'm sure you'd have no trouble understanding."

"Billy-"

He hushes me, pressing his finger to my lips. "Before you say anything, I promise you I will be a *perfect* student." Leaning forward, he lowers his voice to a husky whisper. "And I could teach you a few things, you know, sweet girl like you."

A warmth spreads through my body which I ignore, the minty smell of his gum lingering in the air. "Sorry Billy but I really can't, I haven't got the time. My mom's not... well and on weekends I'm looking after Max."

He clenches his jaw. "You making shit up now? Just say it straight if you're not interested."

"I'm not!" I exclaim, taken aback by his bluntness. I reach for his arm but drop my hand before it connects, realising what I was about to do. "I have a lot to do. Homework, dinner, laundry... I'm sorry."

"Ooh what do we have here?" A familiar voice booms behind me and Tommy appears next to us, grinning from ear to ear. "Moving on so fast? Eve? Brian said you were a little shy last night."

I can feel the blood rushing to my face. "Seriously Tommy, stop."

Billy lifts a perfectly arched eyebrow. "Brian?"

"Yeah, her and Brian Crowe got it on last night at his place. Didn't think she'd be his type but here we are." He throws an arm over Billy's shoulders. "Don't tell me she's yours too, Cali boy."

He shrugs him off and shoots me a look of disgust. "Naw, man. Just wanted to let her know how much of a slut I think she is, can't have Max around that."

I open my mouth to retaliate, but I can't find the words, his insult rendering me speechless. For some reason unknown to me, he has hurt me deeply, so much in fact that I can feel tears stinging my eyes. Fortunately, he doesn't notice as he's already storming off with Tommy in toe.

It was probably the first time a girl had turned him down and that

was why he was so angry, or maybe it was the fact that I had made time for someone else. Either way, I wasn't going to let it get to me.

Let it go, Eve. He's not worth it.

And I will the tears away.

Later that night, myself, Annie and Wayne are having a few beers in Rita Grady's garden. Rita is one of Hawkins' resident party girl. Her parents are always out of town and she's been with every guy at high school. Wayne's brother Kev is friendly with her and got us into her place tonight. Annie had jumped at the chance, dragging me along much to my disinterest.

We're sitting on the grass, passing a bottle of Jack around when Kev approaches us. "You owe me one," he mutters to Wayne as he hands him a freshly rolled joint.

"Nice! Hand it over," Annie demands, holding out her hand.

"Eh, no. I sorted us out with all of this, I'm taking the first drag."

She fishes a lighter out from her back pocket. "But you don't have one of these, do you?"

His eyes roll all the way into the back of his head. "Jesus fucking Christ! How do you always have the upper hand?" he moans, handing it over to her.

"It's just how I roll, dweeb." She winks, bringing it to her red lips and lighting it up. "Really fucking needed this, today sucks. Can't fucking believe my car broke down again, there's no way my dad's gonna pay to repair it, I'm gonna have to get a job."

"Sounds awful, Ann, imagine *you* working. We can't have that, can we?" he teases.

"You could babysit Max," I say, unable to forget what Billy had said to me earlier, despite being tipsy. "I'm way too much of a slut."

"He's a fucking douchebag, Evie. Seriously, he's even going after Steve

Harrington, can you believe that? He thinks he's the new king of Hawkins High or something. Fucking hate him," Wayne sneers.

Annie lets out a puff of smoke, the smell of marijuana invading my nostrils. "He is a douchebag, a major douchebag. But I'd still fuck him. Have you *seen* his ass?"

I roll my eyes. "That's it? That's all you've got to say? Jee, thanks Ann."

"I did say he's a douchebag, but I'm also being honest with you guys, I'd jump his bones in a second." She passes the joint to Wayne and scoots over, throwing her arm around my shoulders. "You should've taken him up on his offer, bet he has more game than Brian, what a disappointment that night with him was. You're supposed to be talking about how good he is in bed right now, not some stupid shit Billy said."

"I know right," Wayne agrees. "But I guess Billy is like a year older than us so more experience y'know, plus he's lived in Cali so bonus points. Brian has never stepped foot outta Hawkins."

My mind drifts off, replaying the memory of Brian's lips on mine. He tasted sweet enough to eat and I wanted so badly to experience that again. I was having a hard time actually processing the fact that I had finally kissed him after months of crushing on him, it was surreal.

He hadn't turned up at school today which I found odd, but he had been pretty embarrassed about Tommy's interruption and I figured he wanted to stay away from the gossip this morning.

But despite the fact that I'd had my first kiss, I still couldn't stop thinking about Billy.

"Evie?" Annie says, holding the joint out to me. I reject her offer and she shrugs. "I ain't complaining."

"Pass it!" Wayne demands.

I giggle, taking another swig from the bottle of jack, my vision starting to spin. Kev and his friends turn on the radio from where they're lounging in the far end of the garden, Here I Go Again by

Whitesnake blasting from the speakers. I nod my head to beat, finally feeling the buzz of the alcohol.

"What time is it?" I ask.

Wayne glances down at his watch. "Exactly nine thirty."

"Can you believe my mom gave me a curfew last night? I wonder if it still stands tonight." I roll my eyes. "She said she didn't trust Brian."

Annie lets out a cackle. "That's hilarious when you consider the fact that you spend your weekends at the Hargrove's."

"Honestly, she'd freak if she knew about Billy."

"Guys!" Wayne hisses, stiffening.

Annie and I both pause.

"What the fuck, Wayne?"

"Shut up, Ann! Listen!"

We keep silent and in the distance we hear it. Billy's Camaro.

"Speak of the devil," I mutter, reaching for the bottle again. I'd need to be drunk to deal with him. "Can we call it a night?"

"We only have one ride outta here," Wayne points out, his eyelids heavy. "And Kev ain't leavin' until Kev feels like leavin'."

We hear the Camaro's engine grow closer until it falls silent out the front. Rita jumps up and runs into the house, a huge grin on her face. She was probably dying for a ride with Billy, pun intended.

We watch as Billy saunters out, clad in his leather jacket and a white t-shirt. His mullet glossy under the night lights, the curls perfectly defined. Tommy and Carol followed closely behind; it seemed they tagged along everywhere he went.

A roar from Kev and the rest of the gang sounds as the trio make their way toward them. I breathe a sigh of relief, glad they hadn't

noticed us sitting under the tree, the shadow completely concealing us.

As the hour passes, I can't help my eyes from drifting over to the gang in the corner, my gaze settling on Billy as he lounges on the grass, propped up on his elbow. He's chatting to Rita and I watch as she bats her eyelashes at him, twirling a strand of hair around her finger, a hint of cleavage as she leans closer to him, giving him an eyeful.

He was probably going to bed her later. But somehow *I* was the slut.

It was really starting to piss me off.

"You ok, Evie?" Annie asks, running a hand over my head.

"No, I'm annoyed. Look at them, look at *her*." I pout, crossing my arms. "She's so fucking easy but I'm what he considers a slut, that's such bullshit."

Annie grins. "Me thinks someone's had too much to drink, what do you say Wayne, do we take her home?"

"Kev's not going anywhere," he replies from where he's lying on the grass, arms tucked behind his head, eyes closed. "I'm not askin' him, he'll just give me shit later."

"I'll ask him then, it's no biggie. Plus I think Kev likes me." She pushes herself up off the ground, dusting off her jeans. "Be right back."

I watch as she approaches the group, her straight blonde hair blowing lightly in the cold night breeze. Kev's face lighting up upon seeing her. I watch Rita as she ignores Annie's interruption and scoots closer to Billy, her fingers in his hair. He says something to her and she giggles, but the moment is ruined by Tommy throwing an empty beer can their way.

"I wish she'd hurry up," I whine, rising to my feet and wobbling slightly. I was drunk as a skunk. "It's so cold and I'm so freakin' tired."

I move to stand up and Wayne opens an eye. "Sit your ass back down, I'm not babysitting you tonight."

"But it's been like ten minutes!"

"So? She'll be back, I'm sure she's just trying to seduce Kev into leaving."

I ignore Wayne's reasoning and head towards the group, the garden spinning before me, feeling slightly nauseous. After a half bottle of jack, my dignity was out the window. Everyone's head turning upon my arrival.

I ignore their prying eyes. Especially Billy's.

"Annie?" I rub my goosebump-covered arms, my teeth beginning to chatter. It was so stupid of me to wear a t-shirt in this weather.

"Damn, you look like shit!" Tommy says, staring at me.

"Evie, we're leaving in ten," Annie says, turning to me. She grabs my arm. "C'mon lets get you inside, you're freezing up."

"Why'd you take so long?" I ask her as we enter the house and into the kitchen. I slump into a dining chair, my mouth dry.

She heads for the sink and fills up a glass of water. Placing it in front of me, she begins walking back outside. "Drink, we won't be long."

I begin to speak but she's already gone. Through the glass double doors I can see she's running back towards Kev. She was such a flirt.

Rising to my feet, I walk towards cabinets and rummage through them, my stomach growling with hunger. If I didn't eat anything soon, I was going to end up vomiting in Kev's car or worse, at my place, only to get a lecture from my mom.

Spotting a bag of chips, I stand on my tippy toes and stretch my arm as far as it can reach and manage to snatch it with the tips of my fingers.

When I turn around, he's standing there, watching me intently.

"What? Wanna insult me again, Billy?"

"What are you doing here?" He asks, narrowing his eyes at me.

"I don't have to answer that question," I say, ripping open the bag of chips.

"You're fucking wasted." He moves closer, scanning my face. "Who took you here?"

"Seriously? Why do you care? I'm just some slut to you."

He clenches his jaw. "You lied to me."

"I didn't!"

"Yes, you did!" He hisses, stepping forward, backing me up against the counter. "You think I'm fucking stupid or something?"

"No. I told you the truth! I was with Brian on Sunday, yes, but that's different..." I trail off, not knowing how to explain that situation.

"How so? Enlighten me." He cocks his head to the side, listening. His eyelashes black against the pale blue of his eyes.

"I like him, okay? It was planned, completely different to a study buddy."

I see a flash of something in his eyes but I can't pinpoint what it is. "You like that douchebag? Didn't think you'd stoop so low."

"Billy, I'm not... I need to go. Can you get outta my way please?"

He leans in, placing his hands on either side of me on the countertops. So close that I can smell cigarette smoke on his breath. "Did I hurt your feelings, Eve?"

I'm surprised he remembers my name and my heart leaps, enjoying the way it rolls off his tongue. "Yeah, you did. After Saturday night I expected a thank you. You know what I did for you right? Dragged your ass outta the Byers house all the way home, worried about you the next day, called you, and you say that about me? After all of that? And not only that, but you know damn well what a slut is and I am not one. I am not that stupid fucking bimbo that you fucked on

my first night of babysitting Max. I'm not-"

"Stop. Talking," he says, gripping my chin between his fingers. "I'm taking you home, okay? Your buddy came over, told us you needed a ride."

I frown, his face coming in and out of focus. "But... they need a ride too."

"I've only got room for you darlin'." He smirks, his tongue sliding over his bottom lip.

"Billy," I start, leaning back, trying to put some space between us. I could barely breathe. "Can you move."

"Only if you accept my offer, can't turn me down again, Eve or would you?"

"I feel sick," I say, the nausea creeping up on me. The thought of Jack Daniels making it worse. I wouldn't be drinking that again any time soon.

"Is that a yes?"

Behind Billy, I watch Annie through the glass doors. She's still flirting with Kev. Would she mind if I left? I had a funny feeling we'd still be here an hour later and Wayne wasn't going to persuade his big brother.

I needed to get home before my mom started worrying and I didn't want to deal with her while I was this drunk, especially on a Monday night.

Billy's offer sounded too good right now.

"Okay."

He smiles, slowly backing away from me. "Good girl, follow me."

As we both head for the hallway, the back doors open. It's Rita.

"Billy?" She questions, hurt evident in her voice. "Where are you

going?"

He turns to her. "Home. Sorry babe, I'll call you.

"With her?" She exclaims, her eyes wide. "What the hell, Billy? I thought... I thought you were having a good time... with me."

Striding over to her, he strokes her cheek with the back of his hand. "I had the *best* time with you. I'm just returning a favour, that's all. See you tomorrow, yeah?"

Despite the hurt, she nods, a small smile on her lips.

As we begin to walk, I stumble, nearly falling against the wall. He grips my arm, steadying me and a wave of nausea washes over me. I groan. He places his hand at the small of my back and guides me through the hallway, out the front door towards his infamous Camaro.

"Here." He shrugs off his leather jacket and throws it over my shoulders. "Don't want you getting pneumonia. Heard it fucking sucks."

"T-Thanks," I mumble, my teeth chattering again. It smells of leather and cigarette smoke and Billy Hargrove.

"Watch your head," he says as he helps me into the passenger seat. To my surprise he buckles me in and I stare at him, eyes wide. "I drive fast."

Billy P.O.V

Billy regretted ever saying those cruel words to her. It was wicked of him and she didn't deserve it. But he was a jealous creature and the thought of the sweet babysitter with another guy made his blood boil. Brian fucking Crowe.

It was stupid, he knew that, after all, she wasn't his to claim. Hell, he'd only interacted with her twice. But he could see her now; really see her and her kindness that Saturday night had reminded him of his late mother. He missed being cared for, missed having someone looking after

him and in Eve he found that.

But there was a problem. She was a loser. Billy wasn't.

He wanted her but he didn't want to be seen with her.

And Billy couldn't risk his reputation.

It was the only thing holding him together.